

Review Article**A Feminist Gothic in the American Literary Fiction****Assist Lect. NIBRAS NIHAD KAMAL****College of Education for Human Sciences (Ibn-Rushd)****University of Baghdad****Keywords:** Eco gothic, ecofeminism, feminist gothic**Summary:**

Teresa Fitzpatrick presents a connection between oppressed women and the plant of Wisteria in gothic fiction in her article "Wisteria: A Female Eco-Gothic Metaphor in American Fiction Through the Ages." The connection between women and nature is common in literature as women are usually compared to the beauty or ferocity of flowers, rivers, or natural phenomena in general. The connection extends to the architecture and sort of plants that appear in gothic literature. Gothic novels have routinely been connected to the secrets and life stories of women who cannot have the liberty to live or share them outside their homes. A fearful house with a prisoned person, ghost, or a secret is mostly normally found in gothic writing. Women have excelled in writing this sort of fiction. This paper is a review of Teresa Fitzpatrick's article, which presents an analysis of a number of pieces of American fiction that contain references to wisteria along with the representation of women who are imprisoned within their homes. The review depends on the methods of summarizing, comparing, and concluding to state the difference between this article and the previous studies. The study concludes with the result that the writer Fitzpatrick has done a comprehensive analysis of the link between the fate of women and nature in gothic fiction. However, further studies can be conducted on the subject to include the link between women and their surrounding structures, homes, and buildings to understand the shared fate between women and the space they occupy.

Introduction

In their book *EcoGothic* (2015), Andrew Smith and William Hughes discuss the connection between nature and gothic novel. "Gothic fiction started with the spreading of gothic architecture which accompanied the romantic movement in the west. Gothic fiction, thus, exists as a fair shot of romanticism that idealized nature and used it as a metaphor for human nature." The development of ecocriticism has suggested a connection between women and nature in literature. Specifically, ecofeminist studies focus on the woman's image, rights, representation, and freedom in relation to the natural environment around her. Consequently, in gothic fiction, it is common to see women's imprisonment located in certain structures, mansions, large houses, and secret rooms that are placed amid the larger nature around them.

"Gothic feminist studies the situation of women in gothic fiction and gives special attention to the figure of the female gothic. The latter refers to the anxieties and oppression experienced by women and which are perfectly reflected in gothic fiction, especially the fiction of Anne Radcliff." Ecocriticism surfaced in the 1990s and seeks to investigate the literary and cultural ties between humans and other species. This covers habitats, climate, minerals, plants, and animals. Using the Gothic Eco critical view, one may establish the fear and anxiety that frequently accompany the relationship between people, especially women, and nature. This can reveal the distressing aspect of what happens when people engage with nonhuman surroundings. Actually, the prevalent American perspective on nature, or ecocriticism and gothic fiction, finds a fertile canon in American fiction that can be studied according to them. Regarding American fiction, state the following about it:

"The dominant American relationship with nature, whatever else it might have been, has always been unsettling. Two centuries before eighteenth-century writers Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe invented and popularized the European gothic, America was already a haunted land: the ghosts born of colonialism and its attendant environmental perversity grew entrenched in the very soil of North America's."

Therefore, there is an old connection between gothic literature, women protagonists, and nature in American fiction. This connection deserves to be studied in depth in order to understand the reasons why authors link women in gothic fiction to natural phenomena.

Literature Review

In his chapter "American Gothic and the Environment, 1800—Present" (2013), Matthew Wynn Sivils draws the connection between gothic literature and natural phenomena in north and south America. He states that the diversity of nature in the two Americas forces itself on writing. However, the chapter does not focus on female protagonists, but he mentions American Gothic works in general. Monica Christin Soare, a literary researcher, writes that: "The Gothic romance emerged as a vehicle for the new female connoisseur because of its generically conventional form, which enables connoisseurial mastery, and its anti-realist content, which renders it an emblem for the aesthetic more broadly and a counter to the domestic more particularly."

Soare dedicates her work, "The Female Gothic Connoisseur: Reading, Subjectivity, and the Feminist Uses of Gothic Fiction", (2013) to analyze the ways in which gothic fiction enables a better representation of women's imprisonment and limitation. The gothic genre enables the writer to work in a free domain that transcends the direct reality which liberates them to represent women as prisoners within the confinement of home.

Coral Ann Howells (2014) suggests that in order to understand the development of gothic literature in modernity, one must reevaluate early Gothic novels (1790-1820) as imaginative explorations of emotions, especially the female anxieties.

Howells follows the evolution of gothic from authors like Mrs. Radcliffe and M.G. Lewis to Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte, making "Jane Eyre" a key work in this context that inspired writers in both America and England to write on its main plotline.

Fred Botting (2014) reviews the literary manifestations of American Gothic in different mediums and genres. He suggests that the dominant link between readers and gothic literature results from the secrets and complex relationships that it presents. Such relationships are reflections of different longings not only for other humans but also for the building and the nature that surrounds it. The tackling of complex connections among characters and setting draws readers to gothic literature and makes the secrets and homes of the protagonists identifiable with their own.

Justin D. Edwards (2017) writes that the Gothic in the contemporary era has merged with different genres at the hands of women writers. Female protagonists are transformed into female gothic in works such as Twilight Saga, Hunger Games, Interview with the Vampire, and more. In these works, especially ones that focus on vampires, women's bodies are placed in a landscape of horror in the woods and natural forests, where they must choose between humanity and vampirism to satisfy their beloved males.

Alexandra Hauke (2024) studies American feminist gothic as a literary genre that originates in American folklore and traditional tales of colonialism. She states that the fear and exploitation of women and nature have started since the coming of settlers in 1492. Ever since then, tales of oppressed women and nature intertwined in horror folkloric stories that transformed later into gothic literature. More specifically, the writer focuses on the native American women and their tragedies.

Matthew Wynn Sivils (2017) discusses the utilization of plants as an essential aspect of gothic fiction in America. He reviews the work of different authors who refer to the oppression of women along with animals, plants, forests, etc. Such as Edgar Allen Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. He says that plants are, in themselves, scary objects. They feed on the land with their roots like vampires and spread their boughs high in the air to conquer the space and add an element of fear to novels.

Jericho Williams (2017) links the American Gothic experience with the times of slavery. Slaves were kidnapped and imported from different parts of Africa to work in farming and other work on plantations. Slave men and women were treated savagely by plantation owners. The fear and horror that women slaves faced was abhorrent and incomparable to anything represented in gothic literature. Nature intertwined with owners to oppress and destroy the humanity inside these slaves. Williams explains that slave narrative is an inseparable part of American ecogothic fiction.

Teresa Fitzpatrick (2023) analyzes two late Victorian Gothic short stories: HG Wells's "*The Flowering of the Strange Orchid*" and Howard R. Garis's "*Professor Jonkin's*." She concludes that these authors have presented American feminist gothic from a very

strange view, which is introducing femme fatale women along with monstrous plants. In these works, writers identify women's tyranny and evil with that of monstrous nature.

Jimmy Packham, Emily Alder, and Joan Passey (2022) link the feminist Gothic in America to life near the sea. The article provides different examples of how the wild nature of the sea causes death and suffering for those near it. It is something similar to the wild nature of some female gothics who either endure the loneliness and suffering and die, or they cause this suffering to the others.

This paper aims at comparing the previous studies to the work of Teresa Fitzpatrick, "Wisteria - A Female Eco gothic metaphor in American literature through the ages" (2013). It is aimed to understand her view of women and nature in Gothic fiction in comparison to the view of other writers

Main Body

Fitzpatrick has written an important article on Eco gothic titled, "*Wisteria - A Female Eco gothic metaphor in American literature through the ages*" (2013). She addresses the frequent appearance of the plant of Wisteria in American Gothic tales. The plant has a dark purple color and a large appearance that makes it fit to represent the suffering of women in American fiction.

Women have been linked to nature in different ways across literature. The article selects a number of novels and short stories where women have been mistreated and/or killed, alongside the wisteria trees around them. The wisteria in these works stand for the transformation of the homely space into a zone of torture.

Fitzpatrick chooses an eco gothic approach to the analysis of the relationship between the plant and women. She reviews the stories concerning plot and symbolism to decipher the link between women and nature in the stories. However, the study does not cover enough samples to be comprehensive. She refers to other texts that have utilized the metaphor of the Wisteria, yet the title of her paper remains too broad for the few samples she considers.

Fitzpatrick, who focuses exclusively on the connection between the Wisteria tree and female oppression, neglecting the general location for the stories. What makes Gothic tales frightful is not the natural surroundings alone but the structure of the home which is neglected in the paper. Fitzpatrick employs an eco-gothic approach to analysis which is suitable for the nature of her article. Her article is different from the other American eco-gothic studies in that she does not limit herself to one period of time or one genre of fiction. She extends her article to references the general American canon of fiction that include female suffering and the Wisteria plant.

Conclusion

The reviewed article has presented a decent analysis of the linkage between Wisteria and the fate of women near them. Nevertheless, the researcher has chosen a very narrow topic that focusses on one plant in gothic fiction; she has broadened the sample to include all the gothic works that have important references to the Wisteria

tree. Under the scope of criticism, taking a plant and making it a sign to humans is very genius and very invented, but it is not sufficient for the atmosphere of the Eco gothic. It is reflected her point of view about women psychologically through one element of nature. So, it is recommended that the studies on this topic broaden it to include the home space along with the plants. Also, it would be proper to consider researching this topic in English literature in general and not only in American fiction.

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مقال مراجعة موضوع

القوطية النسوية في الخيال الأدبي الأمريكي

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الكلمات المفتاحية: القوطية النسوية، القوطية البيئية، النسوية البيئية
الملخص:

تستعرض تيريزا فيتزباتريك في مقالها، "نبات الويستيريا: استعارة قوطية بيئية أنثوية في الخيال الأمريكي عبر العصور"، ارتباطاً بين النساء المضطهدات ونبات الوستارية في الخيال القوطي. إن الارتباط بين النساء والطبيعة شائع في الأدب حيث تتم مقارنة النساء عادةً بجمال أو ضراوة الزهور أو الأنهار أو الظواهر الطبيعية بشكل عام. ويمتد الارتباط إلى الهندسة المعمارية وذاك النوع من النباتات التي تظهر في الأدب القوطي. وترتبط الروايات القوطية بشكل روتيني بأسرار وقصص حياة النساء اللاتي لا يمكنهن أن يتمتعن بالحرية في العيش أو حين يبدن مشاركة تلك الأسرار خارج أسرهن. وغالبا ما نجد في الكتابة القوطية منزلاً مخيفاً به شخص مسجون أو شبح أو سر. ولقد برعت النساء في كتابة هذا النوع من الخيال. هذه الورقة هي مراجعة لمقال تيريزا فيتزباتريك والذي يقدم تحليلاً لعدد من نصوص الخيال الأمريكي التي تحتوي على إشارات إلى نبات الوستارية جنباً إلى جنب مع تمثيل النساء المسجونات داخل عوائلهن. تعتمد هذه المراجعة على أساليب التلخيص والمقارنة والاستنتاج لبيان الفارق بين هذا المقال والدراسات السابقة. وتنتهي الدراسة بنتيجة مفادها أن الكاتبة فيتزباتريك قامت بتحليل شامل للرباط بين مصير المرأة و مصير الطبيعة في الخيال القوطي. ومع ذلك، يمكن إجراء دراسات أخرى حول الموضوع لتشمل الرباط بين المرأة والكيان والمنازل والمباني المحيطة بها لفهم المصير المشترك بين المرأة والمساحة التي تشغلها.